

**THE  
ANNUAL REPORT**

OF THE  
MEDICAL OFFICER  
OF HEALTH


FOR THE  
URBAN DISTRICT OF  
**NORTHAM**

FOR THE YEAR

**1950**



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# Annual Report, 1950

## **I.—Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area.**

AREA—4391 Acres.

POPULATION—Estimated Resident, 6509.

Number of inhabited houses at end of 1950 according to the rate books, 2255.

Rateable value, £39,519.

Sum represented by a penny rate, £163.

### **Social and Physical Conditions.**

The District is divided into four wards for the purpose of election to the Urban Council. Appledore returning 6 members, Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill 3 members each.

Appledore has shipbuilding and repairing yards, which employ a large number of hands, and is a favourite sea fishing centre. Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill wards are chiefly residential; Westward Ho! being a popular seaside resort. Sand yachts are in use on the sands at Westward Ho!

The well-known championship links of the Royal North Devon Golf Club are situated on Northam Burrows, and attract a large number of visitors during the year.

Under the name of Kipling Tors, a hillside overlooking Bideford Bay and situated in the south-western area of Westward Ho! has recently been purchased as part of a Kipling Memorial and handed over to the National Trust. This land is about 18 acres in extent, and is a welcome addition to the free beauties of the district.

## **2.—Vital Statistics in 1950.**

### **Births and Birth Rate.**

The total of live births in the District was 73, of which 44 were boys and 29 girls.

There were 4 still births registered (4 boys).

The live birth rate per 1000 of the population was 11.21, that for England and Wales being 15.8.

The still birth rate per 1000 was 0.61, that for England and Wales being 0.37.

### **Deaths and Death Rate.**

The total deaths were 101 (42 males and 59 females), 28 males and 36 females were over 70 and of these 1 male and 2 females were over 90 years of age.

The death rate per 1000 of the population was 15.51, that for England and Wales being 11.6.

There were 3 deaths of infants under 1 year; 41 per 1,000 live births.

That for England and Wales being 29.8 per 1,000 live births.

The following Table gives the causes of death in the District during 1949:

CAUSES					MALE	FEMALE
Respiratory Tuberculosis	..	..	..	..	—	—
Venereal Disease	..	..	..	..	—	—
Influenza	..	..	..	..	—	—
Cancer	..	..	..	..	3	9
Diabetes	..	..	..	..	1	1
Intra-Cranial Vascular Lesions	..	..	..	..	6	14
Heart Disease	..	..	..	..	23	28
Bronchitis	..	..	..	..	2	3
Pneumonia	..	..	..	..	1	0
Digestive Disorders	..	..	..	..	2	0
Nephritis	..	..	..	..	1	1
Premature Birth	..	..	..	..	1	0
All other causes	..	..	..	..	2	3
					42	59

There was one death from Whooping Cough, but no deaths from Measles, or other infectious diseases of children.

### 3.—General Provision of Health Services in the Area.

#### (1) Public Health Officers of the Authority.

There are two Public Health Officers of the Council—the Medical Officer of Health, the Sanitary Inspector, the duties of Water Inspector are in the hands of the Council's Surveyor.

#### (2) Nursing Arrangements in Area.

There is now only one Voluntary Nursing Association in the District. The fully qualified Nurse, who resides at Appledore, covers the whole of Northam Urban District, and also acts as midwife.

#### (3) Hospitals.

The District is provided for by the Bideford and District Hospital. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical cases and contains 51 beds, with specialist services available at clinics held in the Hospital.

The Isolation Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon, and was completed in 1935.

#### (4) Ambulances.

The Ambulance Service is under the control of the National Health Service. An up-to-date Motor Ambulance is kept for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases and an Ambulance is kept at the Isolation Hospital for the use of cases using that Hospital.



#### (5) Clinics and Treatment Centres.

A treatment centre for Venereal Disease and a Tuberculosis Dispensary are available at Barnstaple for Northam District. Tuberculous patients are admitted to Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanatoria.

An orthopaedic clinic is also held at Barnstaple. There are now two Resident Children's Nurseries in the district. One under the control of the Devon County Council.

### 4.—Sanitary Circumstances in the Area.

#### Northam Water Supply.

The Water supply is derived from a reservoir draining a large tract of moorland at Melbury, situated in Parkham parish, and about nine miles from Northam. There is also augmentation of the water supply by pumping from the source of the Torridge at Kismeldon. A scheme to increase the capacity of the reservoir was completed in 1942, adding another 10 million gallons to the former storage capacity of about 40 millions. The average monthly use of water in 1950 was 8,707,000 gallons. As a result of improved water conservation there was no restriction in supply during periods of drought, and supplies were made available to Biddeford, when required.

#### Rainfall for 1950.

Rainfall measurements are made at Melbury Waterworks (500 feet above sea-level) and at the Royal North Devon Golf Club (sea-level). The figures for 1950 were as follows: Melbury Waterworks, 63.81 inches. Royal North Devon Golf Club, 36.11 inches. The highest monthly rainfall at Melbury was 10.40 inches in November and at the Golf Club 6.05 inches in August. The lowest monthly rainfall at Melbury was 2.14 inches in October, and at the Golf Club 0.81 inches in January.

The comparable figures for 1949 were Melbury Waterworks 47.96 inches. Royal North Devon Golf Club, 29.23 inches. The wettest month was October with 11.44 inches at Melbury Waterworks and 7.04 inches at the Royal North Devon Golf Club. The driest month was June with 0.66 inches at Melbury Waterworks and 0.34 inches at the Golf Club also in June.

There is main drainage discharging at Rocks Nose, Westward Ho! which is covered at low water. The only river affected by sewerage is tidal and is only used by a few houses in Appledore, which are too low to be connected with the main drainage. There is, however, a small stream polluted by sewerage water running through the south-west area of Northam District and draining a laundry and over a dozen residences. This stream is now, since the alteration of boundaries, under the control of the Northam Council. Endeavours are still being made to remedy the nuisance by trenching, but sooner or later a piping scheme may have to be carried out if the present scheme is not satisfactory.

(a) During the year the Sanitary Inspector made numerous inspections of a sanitary nature. Complaints of nuisance were all remedied after serving of informal notices.

(b) There are 5 Elementary Schools in the District. All were inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

### 5.—Inspection and Supervision of Food.

#### Milk Supply.

There are 23 registered dairymen in the District, 22 producers and 1 retailer. Samples of milk were taken for examination and analysis. Any

samples which failed to pass the tests were reported on, and further samples in each case were passed as satisfactory.

Inspections of cowsheds were made, and any defective conditions remedied. No evidence of Tuberculosis was found in any milk supplied.

#### **Bakehouses.**

There are 7 Bakehouses in the District. All were inspected and found satisfactory.

#### **Slaughterhouses.**

All slaughtering is at present carried out at the Public Abbatoir in Bideford.

## **6.—Housing.**

There were 17 new Council houses completed in the district and 4 built by private enterprise.

Several houses were inspected under the Housing Acts or Public Health regulations. There was no action taken under statutory powers during the year. Disinfection of rooms was carried out where necessary.

## **7.—Prevention and Control over Infectious Diseases.**

During the year there were 31 cases of Whooping Cough, 59 of Measles, 3 of Scarlet Fever, and 1 of Anterior Poliomyelitis.

Since the institution of the National Health Service diptheria immunisation is carried out by general practitioners and at the child welfare centres and school clinics.

The cleansing and disinfection of infected rooms is carried out by the Sanitary Inspector, and in cases where the bedding of necessitous cases has to be destroyed, the Council gives reasonable compensation.

No action was taken during the year under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, or under Section 62 of the Public Health Act, 1935.





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